



## International Society of

## Peace and Human Rights

### Upcoming Events

#### Amnesty High School Workshop

Amnesty International and ISPHR will host a workshop on activism and the conference for high school students Sunday, March 19th, 2000 from 12:00 to 5:00 p.m. at the International Centre (ground level of HUB Mall, U of A Campus).

#### In Solidarity, In Art

This fundraiser, in celebration of International Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination Day, will feature local artists, musicians, actors and dancers; all dedicated to human rights and the environment.

Performers include Cool Blue Method, Likity Split, Professor Mike Murdock (soloist), The East Indian Dance Group, Rebekah Murdock (dramatist) and more, as well as art by local artists. Advance Tickets \$7 Student and Low Income, \$8 Non-Student. Tickets \$10 at the door. We will also host a silent auction. This event will be held Tuesday, March 21st at the New City Suburbs (10161 - 112 Street, Edmonton, Alberta). Doors are at 7:30 p.m.

For more information or the latest news, check out our website:

[www.ualberta.ca/~hudema/people.htm](http://www.ualberta.ca/~hudema/people.htm)

All money raised through our fundraising events will go to PeaCentury 2000.



## World March of Women 2000

### International

### Women's Day Activities

Wednesday, March 8

The Parkland Institute presents social policy lecturer Marilyn Waring.

Tickets \$10 in advance,

\$8 limited income

\$12 at the door.

Available at Audrey's Books,

Orlando Books and

the Parkland Institute (492-8558)

### The World March of Women

Saturday, March 11

11:30 a.m. at the Winspear Centre.

Indoor celebrations begin at 12:00 p.m.

performances by poets,

singers, dancers.

Speakers at 1:00 p.m.

### Four Corners Society

2nd Annual International

Women's Day

10 Kilometre Run - 5 Kilometre walk

Sunday March 5, 9:00 a.m.

Hawrelack Park

call 430-8480

### Women in Music and Art

featuring Painting Daisies

Friday March 10, 9:00 p.m.

Sidetrack Cafe

March 2000 Vol. 7 No. 3

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# Our Voice

the  
spare change  
magazine

## RAJ PANNU

Everybody's pal  
Everybody's politician

Wendy Mesley



Beneath the print  
Behind the eye

Klein's  
New Language



Publisher:  
Bissell Centre, Edmonton

Managing Editor  
Michael Walters  
Design and Production  
Dave Luxton  
Distribution  
Travis Branter  
Proof Reader  
Kara Dublenko

428-4001 in Edmonton  
1-888-428-4001

Editorial Offices and  
Edmonton Distribution at:  
Bissell Centre  
10527-96 Street • Edmonton, Alberta  
• T5H 2H6

Phone: 428-4001 • Fax: 497-7077

EMAIL:  
ourvoice@bissellcentre.org

WEBSITE:  
www.planet.eon.net/~kwiley/  
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Michael Walters

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provide an income opportunity  
for economically marginalized  
people in our society while  
communicating about their  
issues to the public.

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**Our Voice** is a member of the  
North American Street  
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## Real human rights human wrongs

Jason Harley

From May 1-7 Edmonton will play host to a major global conference. Delegates from 317 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) representing 95 different nations will come together to discuss issues concerning human rights, the environment and economic globalization. Saren Azer is one of the driving forces behind the conference. Saren, a local doctor, came to Canada in 1994 as a political refugee. He is Kurdish and was persecuted in Iran for writing poetry that promoted and celebrated the Kurdish culture. He sat down with **Our Voice** to speak about the upcoming event.

**O.V.** - When and why did you decide to start organizing the conference?

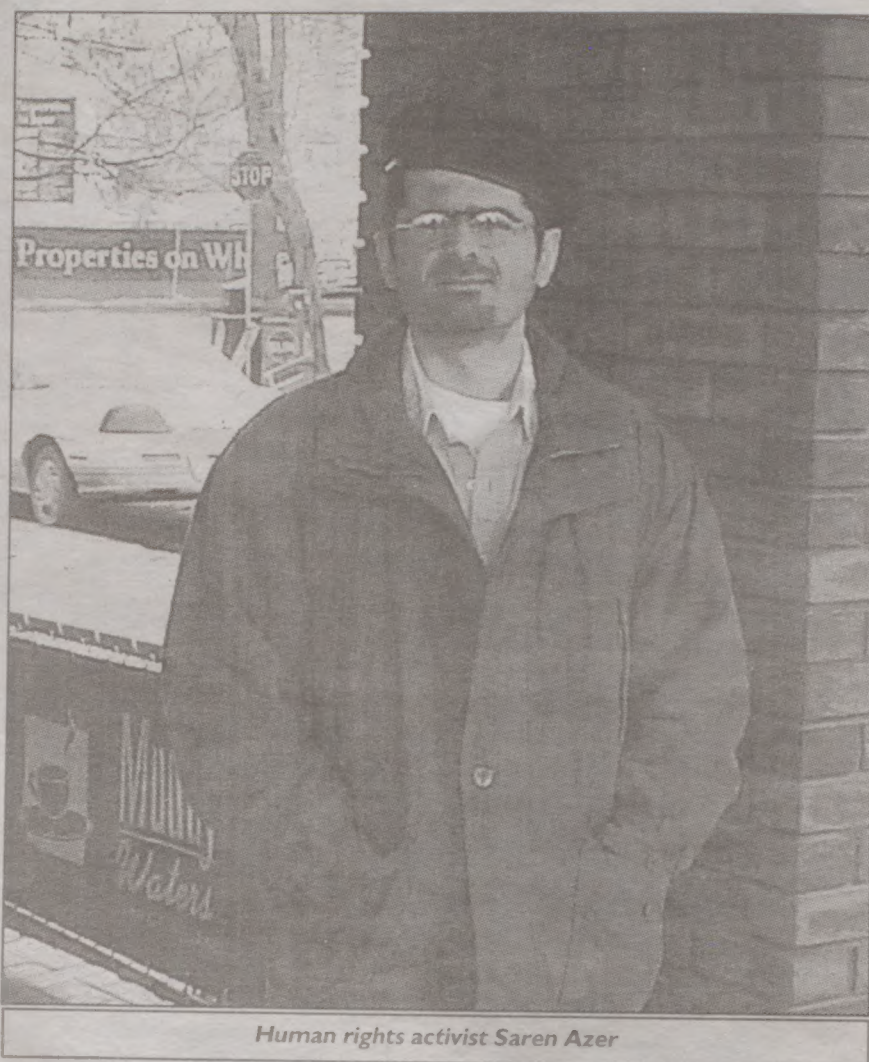
**Saren** - We've been putting it together for the last 14 months. The idea was born after the 1998 UN conference on human rights. I attended and was very disappointed. The meeting was overwhelmed with NGO's. Too much focus was put on bureaucratic process. The grass roots were ignored. Economics also got in the way. Countries such as China, Mexico and Turkey, countries with proven histories of human rights violations, were not discussed. We wanted a conference with a focus on the victims: the grass roots of the global human rights movement. Edmonton will bring grass roots activists together with the purpose of harmonizing their activities. We want to identify common goals and formulate an action plan. The Edmonton conference will be about people coming together to discuss local solutions to global problems.

**O.V.** - What primary issues will be discussed?

**Saren** - The workshops will focus on 3 themes. The first is human rights. The second is the environment and the third is the growing dominance of global economic forces and the detrimental impact these forces, such as the WTO, the World Bank and the IMF, are having on individual human rights and the environment. The idea is to interconnect the themes and bring about a togetherness: an awareness that we are all global citizens and these issues, no matter how distant they appear, affect our every day lives.

**O.V.** - What would you like to see develop as a result of this conference?

**Saren** - Our goal is to establish an international network of NGO's working together. If we can harmonize our activities we will become more effective lobbyists. The issues of human rights, environmental protection and economic globalization are becoming increasingly interconnected. Corporations have erased national boundaries in pursuit of profit. We must now do the same in pursuit of justice. We need to do more of what happened in Seattle during the latest WTO talks. We need to help each other organize and demonstrate. I expect many of the groups to stay in touch long after the Edmonton conference. Working together we can show more people in the developed world how their everyday activities hurt those in the developing world. Education and awareness are the first steps towards individual empowerment. My hope is this conference will mark



Human rights activist Saren Azer

the beginning of a new era in activism. With a united vision we can start to empower the citizens of the world.

**O.V.** - Do you see the United Nations playing a role?

**Saren** - The UN is extremely biased. An excellent example is the economic sanctions placed on Iraq. The people there are suffering under the boot of the UN while China, a state that invaded and still occupies Tibet, suffers nothing. Troops and aid are sent based on the political motivations of the west, mainly the United States. The UN is ineffective. In order to survive it must change. It must become fully humanitarian and focus solely on the needs of the world's citizens. If it does not, conferences such as ours will begin to take the UN's place. NGO's will and are taking matters into their own hands.

The conference will feature workshops throughout each day on any or all of the topics of human rights, environmental protection and economic globalization. An impressive speakers list is being assembled so be sure to read **Our Voice** for further details. In the coming months we will have interviews with various speakers and participants. We are proud to sponsor this important event and encourage all of our readers to attend. ♦

## NASNA FUND

If you like this paper, if you like the idea of helping homeless people become self-sufficient, please help us to continue publishing papers across North America like

**Our Voice**

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# Raj Pannu -

Michael Walters

One of the  
good guys  
on the  
good side

"If it wasn't for the New Democrats and people like Raj Pannu, we'd be all but forgotten here in the inner city," says Betty, a resident of Boyle MacCauley.

"The government here in Alberta gave poor people in this city the boot right since day one and I'm thankful for the once voice the people around here still have," she says.

"Poverty in the absence of a social safety net throws people into desperation. This has increasingly happened in Alberta," says Raj Pannu, a former school teacher and University professor in sociology.

Pannu himself has been homeless.

"In 1947 my family became completely homeless in India. It was the disaster of our community and it left us in complete material poverty. As a child it was quite an experience that I do not ever wish to experience again," Pannu says.

Pannu grew up in Jullundar, India. He came to Canada, after a year in England, in 1962 and began a teaching career in Whitecourt, Alberta. His career in education spanned 28 years.

"I came to Canada and found an opportunity for equality and I benefited from that and now I fight to preserve that equality. We as Canadians cannot give up on these values.

"I see an unacceptable level of indifference toward the poor. As a provincial community we need to develop a greater concern towards those unfortunate enough to be poor, the people who are forced to live on the margins of society.

"We need to strengthen our commitment to passion and to create conditions that guarantee dignity for all of us. This can't be done through voluntary charity. Publicly we all have an obligation to work toward solutions that give dignity to all people.

"I admire people who give money and time to help out, but we need more and this is what I'm working towards," says Pannu.

## A good politician is hard to buy

In a time when politics means having more communications and public relations staff than policy research and community outreach staff, and as more public money than ever before gets coozied into the silk pockets of corporations and wealthy government stake holders it is difficult to attach any integrity to this form of public representation.

But it is not impossible. There is still that opportunity of finding balance between the public good and the private interests of citizens. The questions these days, however, are what is the public good and how much of it is being sacrificed in the interests of fewer and wealthier citizens?

According to Raj Pannu, a politician with the heart of democratic will on his sleeve, politics these days are, "indispensable for citizens to be able to protect themselves from powerful forces, but it is not happening."

Since being elected as the Member of Legislative

Assembly for Edmonton Old Strathcona in 1997, Raj Pannu has been a popular face in the day to day activity of his constituents and many other Albertans.

Pannu, along with his constituency office managed by Flo Pastoor, has devoted great energy to giving strength to the citizens he was elected to serve. He has organized art shows for the poor and the marginalized and hosted a variety of concerts and lectures to nurture a sense of social ability and constitution on behalf of the people who toil each day to achieve security in their lives. He is a pillar of democracy in a political system that has lost sight of the street and the backyards of the regular folk.

As the only current member of the Alberta New Democrats, he finds himself extremely busy fighting many causes, that are crucial to the lives and the dignity of many neglected communities in Alberta.

The interim leader of the provincial New Democrats knows how important politics is and how vital a true sense of democracy is toward creating a healthy society.

"It's about transforming society and about the social power to change things. [A politician's role] is to articulate and define what is public interest and to pursue



New OV Distribution Coordinator Travis Branter, Jerry Carrier, and Raj Pannu.

it...to create political will to change society for the better. This happens by mobilizing democratic and social power and to empower the instruments that create change, as based on public interest."

Pannu feels the opposite is happening here in Alberta and the most blatant example is the current move toward privatization of health care services.

"Klein and the Tories are not interested in public interest...they are more interested in their own interests, so to speak," says Pannu.

## The big bad market

The fact that people are being ignored in the push toward complete free market priority is frustrating for Pannu.

"The market has a tendency to negate our rights as citizens. It is private interest. The market is inherently, at best, indifferent to our common rights and at worst, hostile," says Raj, who doesn't completely disregard market ideology and accepts it as reality in today's world, but he is wary of its nature.

"The relationship between government and corpo-

rations threatens the organic link that should exist between government and its citizens," he says. "At one time corporations wanted free of government, but now they embrace them: for trade, for revelation of market, for protection. Governments have become too friendly toward corporations.

## Power of the buck

As minimum wage has increased slightly in Alberta and as the Klein government boasts daily about the strength of its economy, we see more and more people struggling to survive. The number of people begging on the streets has increase. Both Calgary and Edmonton rank in the first four cities in Canada for problem homelessness, according to Federal government research. People with homes and jobs feel the foundations crumbling and are feeling the squeeze of economic insecurity. So why is it so difficult for the regular Joe and Jane to make and keep a buck?

According to Pannu, "the poor and the middle class have been sacrificed at the altar of reviving a stagnant economy.

"There are people who live in poverty as a result of natural incidents like mental and physical illness, but for others it is by the logic of the system. If we had a seller's market, a labourer for example could sell his labour for more if there was low unemployment, it's supply and demand. But there is a need to keep labour costs down and you have wage repression where people work for less than \$6 per hour, basically next to nothing making it difficult to survive. They have no choice. This is furthered by governments withdrawing social spending so there are no supports for people who are unemployed or unable to work. This is why we have poverty and inequality.

"Democracy means the ability of citizens to control their own state, and when you leave them weakened by your very own systems, this cannot happen. Unfortunately the whole question of social equality and social justice has been lost."

It is Pannu's goal to bring the idea of equality back to this province. He says that he has always been a social democrat and believes that social control in the economy will lead to a wholesome, harmonious and stable society.

"I look at Alberta with a great amount of optimism. Things are shifting to where people are beginning to ask questions about health care and about equality of opportunity, about education, about all the information they sense the government is keeping from them. Albertans are beginning to stand up very strongly and I am glad to work with people and work towards what is fair for everyone."

For many people and organizations in Alberta, Pannu is now the lone soldier connecting them to the government in Alberta. But he knows he has the will to fight for those who demand a voice in Alberta.

"I'm fortunate to have the life I have. I wish that happiness for everyone," he says, "and I'll spend my life working towards that." ♦



# Letters to the editor

I recently purchased my first ever copy of *Our Voice*. I was in the Corona LRT station. I had seen a vendor there a couple times before and had wanted to buy the magazine but never had enough money. This time I had a five dollar bill and decided to purchase one. After getting change for the bus, I returned to the vendor. He was wearing on his hand a small "wrinkle dog" puppet. I always remembered what my father told me about what the vendors were selling, also to buy only from vendors who were wearing a name tag. This vendor had the appropriate tag and was very friendly. His name was Ron and he remembered seeing me in the station a couple times before. I inquired as to the price of the magazine, he told me it was a donation so I handed him two dollars.

Now the importance of all of this to me is how it made me feel.

I'm a first year university student and am constantly looking for some extra cash. My dad always told me that helping people, no matter what their needs, made you feel good. Even if it is your last two dollars. On my way back to campus, I read the magazine and was thrilled that I had purchased one. The articles were well written and the layout was good. It opened my eyes to another world. A simple thing can mean be so much.

I wish the best to everyone who helps and most definitely the best to those people who sell *Our Voice*.

E. Shannon - Edmonton

Letters to the Editor can be mailed to 10527-96 St. Edmonton AB. T5H 2H6 or emailed to [ourvoice@bissellcentre.org](mailto:ourvoice@bissellcentre.org) or faxed to 780-497-7077.

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# Info Planet

Tamara Schwartzentruber

## Report condemns homeless crackdown

A new report by the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty

(<http://www.nlchp.org/>) describes increasing attempts to crack down on the homeless (but not on homelessness) throughout the United States. According to the report, many cities are concentrating on criminalizing the homeless in order to keep them out of view, rather than on using existing resources and creating new means to provide jobs and affordable housing. The report's authors point out particularly harsh treatment of homeless people in New York, San Francisco, Atlanta, Chicago, and Tucson. In San Francisco, police issued over 16000 "quality of life" violations, which are mostly handed out to the homeless, while Tucson city council has gone so far as to consider privatizing sidewalks in order to allow businesses a legal means to keep homeless people off sidewalks.

## Homeless get a break

Despite recent trends, the American Civil Liberties Union has won a legal victory for the homeless in Cleveland. The federal civil lawsuit they launched against Cleveland last December on behalf of that city's homeless population was successful. This means that police must agree not to "arrest, detain, or threaten to arrest" homeless people unless they are actually doing something illegal.

Cleveland mayor Michael R. White insisted that police have never arrested anyone simply for being homeless. But homeless advocate Brian Davis suggested that the new rules would help to prevent police from either harassing the homeless or from trying to act as social workers for them.

The lawsuit was sparked by the December arrest of five demonstrators for sleeping on public property and demonstrating without a permit. Those arrested were protesting against the city's crackdown on homeless people sleeping on sidewalks.

Information on this and related issues can be found on Tedrico's page, at:

<http://4homeless.hypermart.net/>.

## UN commissioner concentrates on poverty

The UN high commissioner for human rights has suggested that European countries need to pay more attention to poverty and inequality as sources of conflicts throughout the world, rather than focusing exclusively on ethnic and political disputes.

Mary Robinson, who is also the former president of Ireland, told a Council of Europe gathering on human rights that "conflict prevention should focus not only on tense ethnic or political disputes but also on chronic under development, grinding poverty, mass unemployment, widespread illiteracy and systematic inequalities of income and opportunities."

Robinson pointed out that "mass illiteracy and poverty are human rights issues no less than freedom of expression, and the willful disregard of the former is as likely to sow the seeds of conflict as the denial of the latter."

## TELUS CORP. records record profits.

An article last month in the Edmonton Journal stated that Telus Corporation's profits in their last quarter have increased by 500% to \$346 million.

Local action group Our Action, who last summer hosted a satirical benefit concert for Telus, mainly to raise awareness about how many Albertans live without telephones, are hopeful that Telus will now be in a position to provide some sort of subsidy for low income Albertans.

"As a company that prides itself on building communities, they need to provide a more direct benefit to the community, more direct than something on the surface like sponsoring sporting events. They need to make a deeper commitment to the livelihood of the city," says Ryan Kelly, a spokesperson for Our Action.

According to Telus Spokesperson Nick Culo, "the money Telus pays in taxes assists the government toward dealing with the issue of poverty."

This comment indicates that Telus does not plan to use their increased profits to provide new solutions to the problem of phonelessness in Alberta.

Telus and large corporations alike can be examined at the Sedar website which is [www.sedar.com](http://www.sedar.com)

MW

## Child apprehensions on the climb

According to the Edmonton Social Planning Council, poverty in Alberta is driving up child welfare caseloads. There are more than 12,000 children on file, a 55% increase from 1992-93.

New comparative data from the National Council of Welfare shows that Alberta's welfare rates for single mothers with one child are the lowest in Canada.

As welfare rates in Alberta have been decreasing, Child Welfare cases have been rising at an eerily equal rate, indicating that poverty is destroying families and the futures of children in Alberta.

You can read more about this and other research provided by the Edmonton Social Planning Council at [www.edmspc.com](http://www.edmspc.com)

MW

## NEXT MONTH in Our Voice

- 6th anniversary
- Charlie Brown goes crazy
- Corporate responsibility for the poor
- So you want to marry a homeless person
- Bill Gates contest winners announced



## Do we want the pretend truth or the real truth?

Just how valuable is it for a middle class journalist to pretend that he is homeless? Some would say it's as valuable as someone who is homeless pretending to be a middle class journalist. But the first scenario is much more dangerous if taken too seriously.

Recently, John Stackhouse, an experienced reporter and foreign affairs writer for the Globe and Mail, left behind the comforts of his life in Toronto and threw himself on to the cold streets of Canada's largest city. For one week.

During that week he took on the pseudo-identity of a homeless person. He begged on Toronto's busiest streets, he slept in overnight shelters, he even slept outside. He mixed company with the throngs of other homeless folks on the margins of urban Toronto.

When the week was over, he returned to his Globe and Mail office and pumped out a diary of his experiences. The diary ran over three days and Canadians were spoon fed observations from a very short excursion into the placenta of abject poverty and broken human life. As far as reporting the reasons for the complicated problems of homelessness and poverty, Stackhouse fell short.

In his diary, which can be viewed on the Globe and Mail Website- [www.globeandmail.com](http://www.globeandmail.com), Stackhouse draws lines between the "needy" and "non needy" homeless. He leads us to believe that those people living with addictions are somehow less needy than those without and that much public money is being wasted and a wealth of public compassion is lost on people who are crack addicts, drug dealers and people who are somehow undeserving of good will.

These are heavy allegations to make after only one week of masquerading as a homeless person. People working for decades in the areas of addictions and poverty have not been able to determine so confidently what Mr. Stackhouse claimed to uncover.

When we look at issues such as homelessness and the causes of homelessness, our goal is to recognize

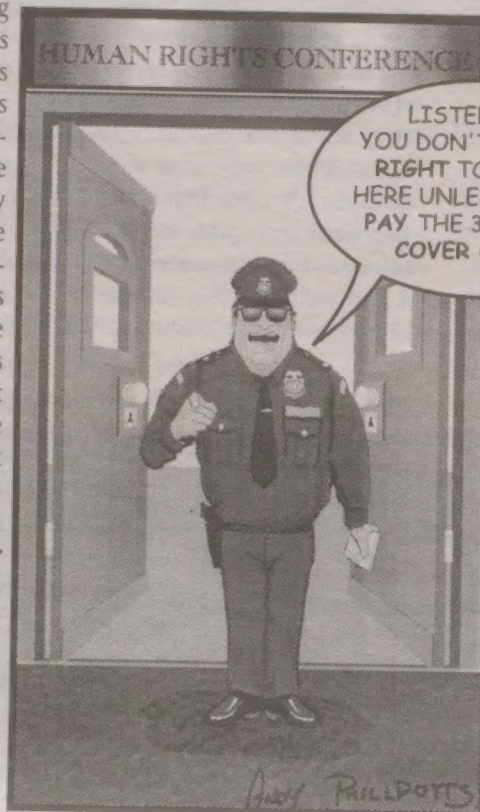
the damage it is doing to people's lives. Then we need to begin to find processes of finding and preventing people's lives from being ruined by this problem.

In our experience here at **Our Voice** we have learned that to find solutions to those problems we must give voice to the people who have experienced them. So when we talk about homelessness and finding solutions it makes sense to hear from those people who are or have been homeless. But this never happens on a large scale. Instead of the Globe and Mail publishing Stackhouse's article about his experiences while he pretended to be homeless, why not publish the diaries of someone who really is homeless. There are endless accounts that people have written about their own homelessness and poverty. **Our Voice** and every other street publication in this country are publishing them all the time. These stories of personal insight

surely must inform and enrich readers more than the words of a person who really has no valid experience with the problem he or she is writing about. The truth resonates in the words of the scarred soul and the battles won or lost, not in the golden pen of benevolent curiosity.

## Editorial OPINION

### Our Voice the spare change magazine



Are we afraid of the truth however? Is this why so many people who have brought their stories into the **Our Voice** offices come with a tale of being told to "to hit the road" by people in the offices of the Edmonton Journal? Is it because larger newspapers have to write the stories and shape the truth in their own interests which leaves the people with the truth drawn on their bones by hard reality without a voice.

If homeless people cry on the street and nobody hears, are they really crying... or something like that.

For many of the people I talked to, the impression left by the Stackhouse piece was that there is a lot of public support for homeless people. Since people are making up to \$200 a day panhandling and they all use drugs, well, there really isn't much we can do. The fire of indifference continues to be fueled. This piece gives people the easy way out again.

John Stackhouse is not the first person to conduct this type of experiment and as with others before him he confesses his actions are to inform people not to change things. Well for people who are trying to change things, the information he is providing makes it more difficult to do that. It encourages people to avoid the truth and homelessness continues to grow and the reasons for it continue to destroy human lives. Meanwhile we continue to read the daily papers and revel in what they tell us, and the people with the real stories wait for the next pretend homeless person to come and be a pretend friend. ♦

**Michael Walters**

## AGAINST THE WIND

### Poverty and Single Parenthood

*"She was a beautiful baby. She blew shining bubbles of sound...She was a miracle to me, but when she was eight months old I had to leave her daytimes with the woman downstairs to whom she was not miracle at all, for I worked or looked for work and for Emily's father, who 'could no longer endure (he wrote in his good-bye note) 'sharing want with us.'"*

Stand Here Ironing - Tillie Olsen

There are many reasons parents are left to raise children alone. Who can judge them? But the result is often a life of poverty and exhaustion that leaves its mark on individuals and on society as a whole.

It was shortly after the cold winds of change began to blow in this province that I found myself alone with three young children. In the old days, before Klein, I would have been allowed the support to stay at home raising my children. And even though it would have been a life lived below the poverty line, I would have chosen it, gladly, for the freedom it gave me to create a home my children could grow strong in.

But the changes came, slowly and insidiously. I can remember listening to radio talk shows when we were still a family, the air waves full of frenzy over the

deficit, welfare bums and taxpayers money - harsh and unreasonable voices, whose opinions unfortunately mattered, whose views, when put into practice, would deeply affect my own life and my children's lives.

The system we found ourselves in under Klein's direction can only be described as merciless. My children and I learned hardship that a life of simple poverty could not have taught us when it was decreed that I, and every single parent, should go to work, no exceptions, no excuses, and don't come crying to us. It was then that we came to know the real meaning of exhaustion, separation and the hard rules of adult time, where mis-matched socks or missing teddy bears don't matter because the bus is coming and if Mom is late again we will be cut off from our only means of support.

A young woman I met while in an SFI employment training program had two children, 2 and 4 years old. Every morning she walked them to daycare, then caught the bus across the city to Millwoods to be taught about computers and life in the working world. Twice she was late and she was warned. The last morning I saw her she was late again. Just before it was time to leave home, her two year old decided to try her mother's lipstick, on herself, on the bathroom mirror and on her brother. They missed the bus. For being half an hour late, for the third time, she was removed from the program and cut off assistance for non-compliance. None of us said anything in protest. It was too close to home. The line between her and us was too thin, and the possible consequences were too

great.

It was also during that time that I learned how little support there is for parenting in general and for single parenting in particular. Single parents fall into a gap between ideologies. On the one hand there is the right, conservative, traditional, family oriented belief system where the idea that children need at least one parent at home is widely accepted. But to this group, single and parent should not exist in the same sentence. It's a moral question and there can be no support, especially taxpayer support, for anything that even hints at immorality. All the arguments on behalf of children are quickly swept aside by the big moral dustmop and the common refrain seems to be, "Don't touch my money."

On the other hand there is the left, open-minded, tolerant group that has put so much time and thought into women's independence that motherhood has been reduced to a hobby, not to be practiced excessively or at least until you can afford a nanny. The suggestion that children, all children, do best with one full-time parent is most often met with defensive arguments.

Caught between these philosophies single parents struggle alone, against the winds of poverty, and the demands of a system designed to benefit no one. Parents suffer and when a parent suffers, their children suffer; children raised with too much suffering are less likely to become all that they can be; the whole society suffers that loss. ♦

**Natasha Laurence**



# Why Women need a day

Rebecca Lippiatt Long



There is rumbling in classrooms and on the streets. "Why do women need special rights?" "Affirmative action is just prejudice against white males."

"Women are equal, just different" - from men, is the unfinished statement.

Sometimes those rumbles turn into growls. "You're my bitch," men yell at one another when one man beats another at a game of pool. This means "I am better than you and I have dominated you." And, "because I am better than you, I control you." This also means "you are my 'woman'." And "you'll do what I tell you, because I am better than you." And "I dominate you, at pool, at life, as a person."

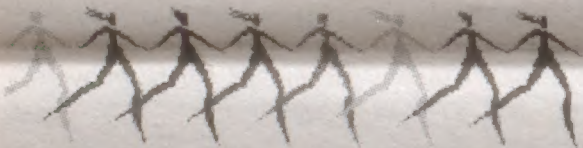
Calling another person "my bitch" is acceptable behavior in public places, on TV, in newspapers, on the street.

On paper, women have equality. On paper, women have the same access to all of the rights and resources and jobs and power that men have. On paper, girls and boys have the same right to education.

Reality does not exist on paper. Paper simply holds our thoughts that mean little without action. We, as a society, have put down on paper that women should be equal. Putting those words into action to change our society is a process that takes time, guts and commitment. It takes constant awareness and monitoring.

Women around the world face these struggles and contradictions to a greater or lesser degree.

A young woman at a high school outside Edmonton is sexually assaulted. Her attacker is charged and convicted of the crime in a courtroom.



When she returns to school, he is there. She was told that if she doesn't like the situation, she should change schools.

In Thailand, sex tourism is sanctioned by the government and girls as young as 7 years old are economically forced into prostitution. In Afghanistan, under the country's laws, women are not allowed to work or to go to school. Women are not allowed outside of the house without a male relative and even then she must be veiled from head to toe or be publicly whipped. If she is wearing nail-polish, she risks having her fingers cut off. In Indonesia, factories contracted by multinationals like Nike and Walt Disney pay women less than \$2 for an 11-hour workday in poor, toxic conditions, while American men like Michael Jordan earn millions off their labour. In China, an estimated million baby girls who should exist on each year's birth roles are missing as a result of population control and a preference for boy children. These girls are aborted, unregistered, abandoned or killed after birth.

It is not possible to say that these practices occur because these countries are unenlightened. In each of these instances, the west participates in these human rights abuses. Canadian men, who are tourists in Thailand use prostitutes. Millions of Canadians wear Nike shoes and support Disney when they take their children to see cartoons at a theatre. Academics and politicians from Canada promote population control without considering the effects on women and children.

In Alberta, women's needs and rights have been waylaid in the quest for privatization and efficiency. In the early years of the Klein government cutbacks, most of the job cuts were to women's jobs. New job creation for women has been primarily in the service industry where wages are often low and benefits nonexistent. This lack of security will haunt women their whole lives. When it comes time for them to collect their pensions that are based on a percentage of

wages earned, these will also be low and have to last longer than the pensions of the average man.

While Alberta pays lip service to human rights with its "Prevention of Family Violence Act," every year, 9000 women and children are turned away from underfunded shelters because there is no room. In addition, this March, a successful program for men who batter their partners is having its funding withdrawn.

Funding cuts to Medicare have affected women to a greater extent than men. Where women were once able to spend 7 days in hospital after the birth of a child, now, barring complications, they must leave within 24 hours.

According to Hana Razga, spokesperson for the New Democrat's Women's Caucus, "when a family member leaves the hospital too soon and requires care, it is most often a women in the family who provides that care." Social services that were once publicly funded now fall upon the shoulders of women.

"95% of Alberta's volunteers are women," according to Razga.

"Jobs that were once paid for by the government have not disappeared. They still need to be done and are now done by women for free," Razga added.

*March 8th is International Women's Day. It is the day when women from around the world stand united against the forces that would try to push them into the kitchen, out of their shoes and on to their backs. It is the day when women stand up and say, "we deserve to be paid a living wage." "Our unpaid work is valuable, needs to be respected, and we need support." "Our bodies belong to ourselves and our daughters bodies are not for sale." It is the day when the women of the world stand up and claim their rights. ♦*

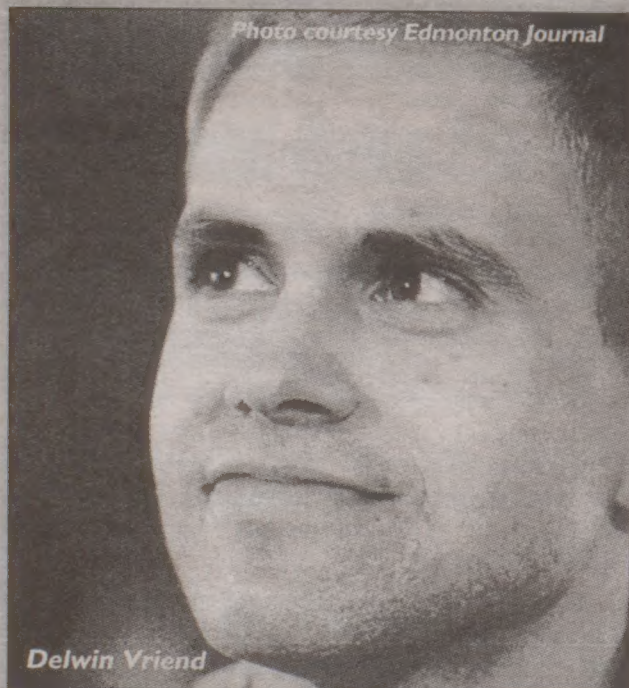


Photo courtesy Edmonton Journal

Delwin Vriend

## Disorienting intolerance

Jason Harley

When King's College found out Delwin Vriend was gay, they fired him. His credentials and teaching record were, at best, secondary considerations. He was fired because the College's administrators disapproved of his lifestyle. Shiela Greckol, of the local firm Chivers, Greckol and Kane, took Mr.

Vriend's case to the Supreme Court of Canada. She spoke with Our Voice about the case and its impact on Alberta.

Upon being fired, the first thing Mr. Vriend did was file a claim with the Alberta Human Rights Commission. The sole reason he was dismissed was his sexual orientation. Unfortunately, at the time it was legal, in Alberta, to discriminate on this basis. His claim was denied. Mr. Vriend appealed this decision in Provincial Court and was successful. The judge found the Commission's ruling violated the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Province appealed this decision to the Court of Queen's Bench. Enter Shiela Greckol and her associates. This time the Province won and the Commission's original ruling was enforced. Knowing she had previously argued before the Supreme Court of Canada, Mr. Vriend and an assortment of community groups and stake holders approached Ms. Greckol and asked for her continued representation. Feeling she had a strong case, legally and ethically, Ms. Greckol agreed to push onward and upward. She donated countless hours on behalf of herself and her support staff to the case. Finally, after a lengthy battle, the Supreme Court overturned the lower court's decision and forced Alberta to include, for the first time, protection for gays and lesbians in its Human Rights legislation. Beyond being a moral victory, the case said a lot about Albertan society and court accessibility.

As the trial progressed through the system, Ms. Greckol noticed what she called "a vein of intolerance" in Alberta. "Our province has a fundamental belief in the entrepreneurial spirit. Those in power think if I did it, why can't you? They do not seem to understand that there will always be those in our soci-

ety who are disadvantaged and vulnerable. And that they need our protection." The Alberta government opposed Mr. Vriend to the bitter end. Even after they lost, Premier Klein spoke of invoking the notwithstanding clause as a way of getting out of complying with the Supreme Court decision. As Ms. Greckol put it, "the very idea of homosexuality went against the fundamental beliefs of many prominent Albertan politicians."

Had Shiela Greckol not donated her time, this case may have never been heard by the Supreme Court. It would have ended with a loss at the Court of Appeals and no change in Alberta's Human Rights Legislation. In other words, it would still be legal in Alberta to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. The nature of our justice system makes appeals lengthy and expensive. Governments have deep pockets. Citizens do not. In criminal court, legal aid ensures any defendant access to adequate legal representation. What about civil court and instances such as the Vriend case, where one person takes on a government? The Federal government has a Federal Court challenges program. A citizen can apply to the program for funding when fighting the Federal government. Shiela Greckol would like to see a similar fund established in Alberta. "The Vriend case provided a clear example of the need for something to deal with provincial wrongs. Another example is social services. All too often people are wrongfully or arbitrarily denied access to government services. On their own, they are not in a position to make use of rights type legislation in an effective manner. The law is complicated. The government has professionals working for them, citizens should be afforded the same right." ♦





## Living in purgatory for twelve years!

### Donald's Story- Part 1

I remember when I was only two years old in 1955. My mom's sister couldn't look after me any more. I was put in an orphanage for kids my age. To me it was like entering through the gates of Hell. In this home I was beaten constantly by a nun named Margaret who didn't like me. I was strapped for almost anything she

could think of. I remember one day I lost my writing books they brought me for school and she ordered me to her quarters upstairs. I got a really bad beating for it, all because I forgot where I put the books. So the teacher of my class got me writing books. I remember lots of times when I didn't hold out my hands, I got hit in other places. Sometimes when I would be late doing my chores or forget I would get a beating for it. These beatings were painful for me. At night I would cry in bed. She would come in and yell at me to shut-up or I would get more punishment, like kneeling on a cold cement floor. This is the main reason why I'm on a Handicapped Pension. Also, I have really bad nerves inside of me, and bad mood swings. This bad stuff went on for years.

When I look at other normal kids, this is usually when my moods swing. I wish, inside, I was normal like them. Also, in this home, I had all my gifts taken away on my birthdays, and Christmas time too! I was never told if I had a family too! This also hurt me. Another time, my dear friend George and I ran away to his mother's place for the weekend. On the way back the police, near the home, picked us up. She took me upstairs for another beating. She asked me why we ran away from the home. I told her the truth and got the beating. I told her I hated this home and

wished someone would come pick me up - like my worker. Lots of times, I didn't feel like talking or speaking. She would ask me why? When I didn't answer her I'd get a strapping.

I can remember one night when I forgot to go to the washroom before bed. I got up to try to go to the washroom and that's when she caught me and asked me what I was doing up. When I told her the reason why, I got a beating on my legs and hands for it. After that I was told never to forget again, but this happened quite a few times when I was there. Sometimes I would tell her to stop strapping me because it was hurting me, and I couldn't take it anymore. More hitting would come, she would tell me "when enough is enough". The punishment was her hands, the strap, or a yardstick. If I stood up for my friends I got punished for it. Also, while kneeling on a cold floor, I would ask her if I could go to bed and the answer was always no. If I tried, I would get grabbed by my arms or have my hair pulled back. Again the strap on my body, if I leaned over with my head and she would see this, that's when she would come and holler at me to kneel straight up or I would get something bad, like another strapping.

Donald's story will conclude next month in the April 6th Anniversary issue of Our Voice.

Total No. of Dead in 1999: 29

Total No. of Victims who  
Suffered Non-Lethal Violence: 6

No. of Cities Where Murders  
Occurred: 11 (Anchorage,  
Chicago, Dallas, Denver,  
Jeffersonville (IN), Los Angeles,  
Portland (OR), Rapid City (SD),  
Richmond (VA) San Francisco,  
and Seattle.

Age Range of  
Accused/Convicted: 14 years of  
age (two), 16, 17, 18 (three) 19  
(four) 20 (two), 21, 28, 29, 32, and 38

Age Range of Victims: 4 months old, 17, 23, 26,  
28, 39 (two), 40, 42, 43, 46, 50, 51, 52, 55 and 62

Sex of Victims: Male: 27 Female: 8

### Los Angeles (May)

#### A Police Shooting Death, A Study in Contrasts

Margaret Mitchell, 55, a 5-foot-1-inch, 102 pound widow, was shot to death by a Los Angeles police officer who had approached her with his partner on bicycle patrol to ask if the shopping cart she was pushing was stolen.

Los Angeles police had recently begun cracking down on homeless people and confiscating their shopping carts.

The police say Mrs. Mitchell brandished a foot-long screwdriver and threatened to kill the officers, until one of them, stumbling as he ducked to avoid her, feared for his safety and fired.

But at least two witnesses dispute the police account, saying that they saw nothing in Mrs. Mitchell's hand and that she never threatened the officers.

Many activists are asking why two police officers couldn't have found a less lethal way to subdue a 55-year-old woman who was only 5 feet, 1 inches tall and weighed 102 pounds.

Police Chief Bernard Parks said it did not appear that his officers had "done anything wrong." He questioned why Mrs. Mitchell's family had not done more to help her and complained that critics of his department were seeking to exploit the incident for their own ends.

In October of 1999, Chief Parks determined that the officer who shot Mrs. Mitchell used faulty tactics, but did not violate department policy. If Parks' views are adopted, the two officers would have to receive

## Homeless deaths: conclusion



(By the National Homeless Civil Rights Organizing  
Project of the National Coalition for the Homeless  
(NCH). NCH is documenting hate crimes/violence  
against homeless people)

Photo by Pieter de Vos

training to improve their tactics.

In response to Chief Parks's decision, the Los Angeles Coalition to End Hunger & Homelessness has called on the Civilian Police Commission to conduct an independent investigation.

"We really found it to be a paradox. How can you have a faulty tactic and still have it within policy. It doesn't make sense," said Bob Erlenbusch, director of the Los Angeles Coalition.

The Los Angeles Coalition also presented the Civilian Police Commission with 10 recommendations to improve police training, including more time in learning how to recognize mental illnesses, and how to handle mentally ill homeless people.

### Portland (OR) (May and July)

On July 14, the City of Portland provided \$125,000 to provide 30 more temporary beds as the result of the killings of three women in May.

The shelter needs of homeless women have received greater attention since May, when three women were found strangled in Forest Park. That a serial killer could be responsible prompted 11 social service agencies and religious groups to demand more emergency shelter, and has heightened awareness of the dangers and difficulties of those living on the streets.

On July 20, Todd Reed, 32, was arraigned in connection with the strangulations of the three women found in Forest Park. He was charged with three counts of aggravated murder.

Reed apparently made contact with the victims, Lilla Moler, 28, Stephanie Russell, 26, and Alexandria Ison, 17, along West Burnside St.--an area where prostitution is out in the open. All three victims were heroin addicts, and two were involved in prostitution.

"They were connected by a lifestyle he preyed upon," said Detective Sgt. Kris Ferrell.

Police said they received about 600 tips as they investigated the killings--some from prostitutes, the victims' friends and others.

The arrest brought slight relief at Rose Haven, a center for homeless women in the Old Town/Skid Road area of Downtown Portland. Homeless advocates expressed relief, gratitude for tenacious police work, renewed sadness for the deaths of the women, cautious optimism that the right man had been caught, and extreme frustration that Portland's streets are still dangerous.

### Richmond (VA) (March)

#### Homeless Man Beheaded

Henry Northington, 39, was found slain and beheaded on March 1. Police still have no motive or suspect in the slaying which apparently occurred near a cemetery. The killer or killers then carried his head nearly a mile, carefully placing it on the footbridge, apparently as some sort of message, police believe.

While the ghastly nature of Northington's death has some in the gay community fearing that this was a hate crime, many in the homeless community are also wondering if he was killed and beheaded because he was a street person.

### San Francisco (February)

#### Beatings of Three Homeless People Under a Freeway

On Feb. 12, three homeless people living under a freeway overpass were beaten.

A homeless couple said the incident began early in the morning when he and his wife were awakened to calls for help from a homeless woman friend who was being attacked by three assailants armed with numchucks and steel rods. He and his wife responded immediately.

Nearby campers identified the attackers for police, who arrested two men, 18 and 20 years old, and a 28-year-old woman.

"We got beat up pretty good.... My wife's forehead and back of her head are busted open," said the husband. She also fractured both of her hands.

The husband suffered a broken arm in the attack in addition to the gash on his head.

"They didn't attack us for money," he said. "They didn't try to rob us. It was a hate crime." ♦



# Welfare keeps her hungry

## The struggle to break free and survive

Linda Dumont

The past six years have been a struggle for survival for Jenna Jetson, but now she has hope for a better life for herself and her two daughters. As a single parent, she had to turn to Social Services, now known as Alberta Human Resources and Employment (welfare), after her husband suffered a massive heart attack. Although the couple had separated, he continued to support the family until his illness.

"They let him on welfare, no problem," said Jenna. "But I had to beg for it. If I didn't have a sick child, (one of her daughters is asthmatic) I wouldn't have had a chance.

"I was stuck in an impoverished situation. You never have any extra money. You pay the rent and the bills but there's never any money for food. The juggling you have to do to survive - it's exhausting."

For Jenna the first two years were the most difficult. She skipped so many meals so her children could eat that she wound up in the hospital suffering from anorexia. Her weight had dropped to 99 pounds.

Over time, she learned to seek out the resources she and her daughters needed.

"It's such a crime. There go the children's piano lessons, and activities in the community," Jenna said. "It's hard to have the children partake in any extras to boost their self esteem. There are things out there even when you are poor, but you have to find them. That's very tiring. You're always looking for programs.

They are mostly through the churches."

Jenna's daughters take part in the Pioneer Girls and in jazz lessons at the local community hall.

Providing food and clothing for the family was also a challenge. Jenna said, "I had to ask my neighbours



Jenna Jetson working on her new salon

for help. The food bank wouldn't help me more than once a month. I was lucky to be living in a neighbourhood where everyone in the community is a helper."

There is another mom who is on assistance living nearby and the two help one another out by sharing their resources.

"The poor people, we trade back and forth to get each other through the day," Jenna said.

She now has a list of resources; the veggie bank, the care closets for clothes, churches in the area, and places to go for free suppers, but it all took time. To

help others she started four clothes closets where people can get free clothing.

Because of her daughter's illness, Jenna said working outside of her home on an hourly basis wouldn't work. She has to be home on the days when her daughter is unable to attend school, so she is working towards being self-employed.

One of her workers helped her to develop her business plan, and her benefits worker has given her six months to get her hairdressing business going. Until she is earning enough money from her business, Jenna is receiving benefits, but her earnings are deducted dollar for dollar from her cheques. To further supplement her income she rents out a room, and that income, as well as the family allowance benefits, is also deducted from her cheques.

Jenna has been remodeling her home to set up a salon in the basement. She bought miss-tinted paints at a reduced price at a hardware store, and has traded with neighbours, giving haircuts and massages in exchange for plumbing and other necessary remodeling work. Through ads in the Bargain Finder it took her three months to get donations of used salon furniture - a sink, hair chairs and accessories.

Jenna said her life is better now because she is earning part of her income. ("If you stay on full assistance, they will bother you. There is no time to get yourself together. They make appointments for you and plan courses for you to take. It's all a huge struggle.")

But there is a price to be paid for living in poverty. Jenna finds her health has declined. Recently, she was invited out to a steak dinner. She refused, even though she was hungry. She was far too tired to go. ♦

# Pompoms or Pistols?

## Ralph Klein's Truth Squads

Tadzio Richards

On Valentine's Day in Alberta the radio was tuned to a station that read the news. I was alone. I was sad, recently having been told to "Go away! It's over."

There was an item about Ralph Klein, who apparently believes the ongoing public forums on his latest health care bill are giving "malicious misinformation" to the public. To "correct" opinions, the premier is planning to send "Truth Squads" into Alberta communities. Truth Squads.

I was recently in Central America studying spanish. My teachers and friends there told me many stories about the civil wars in that part of the world. "Squad", in these stories, referred to a group of men who came in the night to murder those who spoke their minds.

I have been fortunate to have never experienced this kind of horror.

"Squads," for me, are friendly lunchtime games or obnoxious Ra-Ra cheerleading groups in high school gymnasiums. Apart from an intramural "squad," I have almost no kind feelings towards any understanding of the word.

Riot Squad. Pep Squad. Death Squad. Squad Car.

What, exactly, was the premier thinking when he used the term "Truth Squad" in a discussion on health care? Is the Associate Minister of Health and Wellness going to wave pompoms or pistols when he arrives to correct our information? (Will he invite people to pep rallies of proper thinking or will he kick in doors at three in the morning?)

I'm only half kidding. Mr. Klein sometimes uses disturbing language to justify his policies. His words demand apprehension.

On a plane back to Alberta from the south, I read

about a manifesto-petition in the Czech Republic. The petition is entitled "Thank You, Now Leave". In 1989 it was addressed to the soon-to-be-gone Soviet supported regime. Now it is being addressed to the Prime Minister and the parliamentary speaker of that country. Many people in the Czech Republic want their two government leaders to resign. A massive rally of 50,000 people gathered in the streets of Prague in support of the petition.

I had to laugh. Thank you, now leave. Go away, it's over. Love and politics. I guess they can share the same kind of endings.

Power, like love without attention, can turn rancid. Strangely, this depressing thought made me feel better. Clear. As if the pus in my heart had drained away. Once love is gone; an affair is over.

Don't waste time. Move on.

Same with politics. For a long time I've apathetically worried about Klein.

Years ago, I read an article in the Calgary Herald. Nurses were losing their jobs. Elderly people couldn't find hospital beds. Klein was asked if he was aware that Albertans were suffering as a result of his policies. He replied, "Nobody I know is hurting."

At the time this comment appeared as a rare moment of piggy-at-the-trough honesty by a public man. Reprehensible

words. I raged for the length of a pint but did nothing. Klein, I hate to admit, is easy to forgive as a human being. Sometimes he rambles without a point or garbles his message in contradictions. No matter. He's human.

In matters of politics it is possible to disagree with him almost entirely and still respect his ability to do what he said he was going to do. He did ravage public spending. He did balance the provincial budget. I respect someone who backs himself up. Even the new health care bill (which I don't agree with at all) is an action he telegraphed long ago.

I could almost endure him until the next election. But the mood of his new language is now truly unsettling. Klein shows signs of a dangerous escalation in complacency. Establishing "Truth Squads" to "correct" the opinion of Albertans on the issue of health care is a use of frightening and dictatorial language. It is the language of a politician who takes their power for granted and denigrates the intelligence and humanity of their constituency. The premier is slipping into the realm of being in power solely for the sake of being in power.

The end of a love affair is always preceded by signs. Seduction is replaced by resentful demands.

Klein's latest pronouncement is a sign that, for his part, his love for the people of Alberta has turned sour. The relationship of good faith is over.

Alberta is a province where free trade is often described as inevitable and beneficial. In this spirit, perhaps it would be worthwhile to import, tariff-free, some words from the Czech Republic.

Mr. Klein, the time has come. Thank you, now leave. ♦







# The rules behind the bucks

## Are non profits controlled by their funders?

Comment by Theresa McBryan

Years ago conventional wisdom held that in order to sober up an intoxicated person the best thing to do was to pour a couple of cups of coffee into them. Today we understand that giving coffee to a drunk is going to get you a wide awake drunk, which may be no improvement at all. There is an equally suspect kind of wisdom making the rounds of charitable agencies and their funders today. This conventional wisdom is, the economy is booming, there are lots of jobs and money, therefore if a person is poor they suffer either from defects of character, they are lazy or they suffer from poor life and coping skills. Thus the solution to poverty becomes 'cut the lazy slackers off public aid'. They will work if they have to. Then remedy the defects in life and coping skills through instruction in areas like time management, budgeting, self esteem, networking, parenting and so on.

There is one unfortunate problem with this solution. Poverty is not with us because of the defects either of character or skill of poor people. Poverty is with us because there is greed in high places. Resources belonging to all are being held by a few. There are not a lot of good jobs, there is not a lot of money for anyone who wants to work for it. Therefore, like pouring coffee into a drunk, providing help in mastering all these admittedly useful skills only gets you poor people, most of whom do work, with good time management and budgeting skills, high self esteem who are still poor and like the now wide awake drunk are mad as hell. Having mastered these skills they know that the problems never did reside within them and resent continuing efforts to blame poverty on them.

Enshrined in trite proverbs such as "give a man a fish and he will eat for a day, teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime" is the attitude that to give a person living in poverty anything except advice is not in his/her best interest. This has created a system of charitable endeavors that constitutes a thriving poverty industry whose most significant benefactors are not those who live in poverty, (these can only have old clothes and the odd free meal), but those who provide all that useful advice. Virtually all the government funding for social and community services is going into these make work programs that leave the genuinely destitute to freeze or starve on the street while they prevent another slice of the middle class from falling any further into poverty. I say falling any further, because for the most part these are not very high paying jobs either.

Charitable groups that agree with the official assessment that the causes of poverty reside in the defects of poor people can get financially rewarding contracts as government service providers. Goodwill Industries is a good example of this with net assets of more than \$7 million according to their 1998 annual report. Anyone who has had anything to do with Goodwill Programming knows that there is no substantive difference between Goodwill's approach to it's 'participants' and that of SFI. Goodwill is a multimillion dollar enterprise now. Who says talk is cheap?

Groups who do not subscribe to the conventional wisdom can have an uphill battle to get funding for their programs. For example Family Community Social Services (FCSS) is the agency responsible for handing out Albertan's tax money to municipalities

for community services. They are a major funder in every municipality in Alberta. FCSS also ascribes to the conventional wisdom.

There is an economic triage going on here that limits anything a group can do to aid anyone who has already fallen into the kind of poverty difficult to get out of because of mental, emotional or physical disability, substance abuse, age, race or sexual preference. FCSS is not interested in supporting groups who pick a demographic which has limited value on the labour market. This does make some sense since theoretically all these individuals should fall under the Social Development Act, to say nothing of the UN Charter of Economic Rights, but we all know what has happened to those services. The Klein administration has not only pushed almost all its responsibilities for these issue onto the private charity sector, it also has the gall to tell those charities they have to tow the official line concerning "the defects of poor people theory of poverty". This has created a have and have not culture of charities.

This is a pretty good deal for the government when you think of the economic value of all the volunteer hours people, especially poor people, devote to charities. You can usually get at least ten hours of volunteer time gratis for every hour of staff time. Believe me, they want all those free hours.

There are groups who do not agree with "the defects of poor people theory of poverty". They call themselves grass roots groups. Somewhere the battle lines have to be drawn. Somewhere groups have to decide "are we creating programming to help people or to acquire funding?"

If they get their major funding from the government it is fair to wonder how much of their policy is dictated, albeit subtly, by their funders.

Anything the government is willing to fund probably is doing the government more good than it is doing for poor people. In it's own way, where you put your charity dollar is a vote for or against the Klein Administration. ♦



A world of beautiful babies

## (S)mothering Feminism

Heather Slade

Since the advent of the birth control pill forty years ago, women have been able to make the decision to become a mother or not to. Prior to this women were slaves to the whims of Mother Nature. In previous generations, becoming a mother meant loss of status if one was not married. It meant loss of freedom if one became a man's marital 'property'. And, if a woman chose not to have children, she was considered selfish or to have been punished by

bareness. One would think in the subsequent decades that society's thinking would have changed. This is not the case.

Ask any single mother how many times she's felt contempt. How many times has she heard how "those girls just have babies to get more money". It makes no difference that this same 'girl' was abandoned and left with the kids. She takes the bus to get to and from college. There she works hard to make a good life for what is left of her family. She's too busy building new dreams to pay much attention to whatever it was she should have done. She hears from her more 'liberated' friends just how glad they are that they chose abortion. They see her life as backward and imprisoned. She supports their right to choose, but it seldom seems that this is reciprocated. It's not fashionable, after all, to be trapped by kids.

Then there is the 'new woman', AKA Supermom, who did it all by the book. Even within the women's movement there are areas of dissension surrounding motherhood and marriage. This is evident in feminist Jane O'Reilly's comment that being a mother was akin to "murdering one's own soul". This super woman has done it all. She has an education, to make her more marketable to the kind of man she wants. She has sexual experience, but never more than the man she's currently with. She views children as products, reflective of her, to be produced, assembled and turned over to others for care. She will never be the proverbial bare-foot, pregnant, subservient wife that her grandmother's generation was best known for. Instead, this woman will be the model by which all mothers are judged. She will also be the one blamed when anything goes wrong, after all, she's in charge.

For the women who couldn't or wouldn't have chil-

dren there is a different set of hurdles. For the married childless woman there are the intrusive questions about when she plans to start a family. It is usually assumed that the couple in question is barren, and as such are afforded pity. The single woman is supposed to have the fail-safe biological clock tick, tick, ticking. She is supposed to find a man, any man and reproduce post-haste before all her eggs go stale. And if she doesn't? She's selfish, stupid or very possibly ugly. She must be. Why else wouldn't she want the joy of motherhood? Her mother-friends all try to convince her what a blessing this all is. She's wary, remembering that misery loves company. But as the clock winds to a halt, she'll always wonder if she did the right thing. How can she know for sure?

It is a confusing time for women. The feminists of yesterday are urging us to take up the cause. They are eager to show us their war wounds and medals of bravery. Do they realize that the timing of their 'Liberation' was crucial to its power? It was a time of affluence and libertarianism. Peaceful revolution was in the air. Obviously feminism has influenced even our most famous. Oprah, for example, almost 45, remains unmarried and childless in favour of success. There was a time, not long ago, that this would have been unheard of. It is unlikely that there will ever be a time in our culture where women will, en masse, be relegated to total dependency on men. We have a legacy behind us now. There are women who decided that they needed something beyond what their husbands could provide. Women have certainly "come out of the closet" so to speak. We've even come out of the house.

But baby, we've got a long way to go! ♦



# Under the print, behind the eye

## Examining the media

Rebecca Lippiatt Long

In this series I will be taking a look at news media. News media comprises everything from Our Voice to the Globe and Mail to the Internet and television. In a series of snapshots I will try to show what people in the Canadian media think about their jobs and question if what they produce is living up to both the standards they set for themselves and to standards set by those who absorb their work.

I will be talking to people like John Stackhouse, a journalist for the Globe and Mail who wrote an article about the week he spent living on the streets as a pretend homeless person and to Joanne Nugent, a reporter with A-Channel, who covers the streets of Edmonton.

Because advertising most often sustains media sources, I will address the issue of profits and question if news is sacrificed for financial return. I will also investigate the concentrated ownership of Canadian press and how that has affected this country's journalism.

For the first installment, I talked with Wendy Mesley, the host of CBC's Undercurrents and Helen Mann, the anchor for CBC-TV Edmonton News.

*"People living on or below the poverty line cannot afford public relations people and consequently tend to be ignored by mainstream media until they do something provocative like camp out in large numbers in the downtown park."*

"Journalism is a social service." Helen Mann uses these words in the broadest sense - service to society as a whole. She believes that the media has a responsibility to all segments of society, from the very poor to the very rich. For the media to do its job properly, it must not focus on only one part of the public sector.

Helen Mann has worked at CBC for eleven years, first as a producer and for the last year as an anchor. In her experience, CBC tries to focus on a broad range of stories that reflect the local community. She thinks that the key component for reporting stories is to find a balance. If one point of view is shown, the other point of view must also be given.

Stories that air on the nightly news attempt to examine the day's happenings. Content of the program is chosen by collective effort of the staff. Mann

points out that because employees come from a variety of backgrounds, this diversity tends to be reflected in the news.

For journalism to be socially responsible, it must tell people what is going on in the world around them. Mann thinks that CBC is sometimes better able to do this than other stations as it is publicly funded. This lack of reliance on advertising allows reporters to do less rushed, more in depth stories that they might not be able to pursue in a financially driven environ-



Wendy Mesley



Helen Mann

ment. This also allows CBC staff to keep their distance from advertisers, and if necessary, to be critical.

Wendy Mesley is the host of Undercurrents, a show that can be critical of the media. The CBC production tackles how media and information technology are changing Canadian lives. One recent story Undercurrents covered was how the advertising industry uses professional psychologists to determine how best to sell products directly to children. Another piece critiqued how Tylenol commissioned a survey and hired doctors to promote the results. Both the survey results and paying doctors went largely unquestioned by the media.

Mesley believes that working at CBC gives her a freedom that she would not have at another station. Because CBC is run by the taxpayers of Canada and is not a for-profit corporation, this gives Mesley and other staff at CBC the freedom to "poke advertisers in the ribs," without fear of repercussions. While much of the media is constrained by what is acceptable to the advertisers, Undercurrents and CBC are

able to step outside those constraints.

Still, Mesley has had to fight for her show in a time of budget cuts. Like other journalists, she feels the pressure to produce. She believes this pressure is what pushes some journalists to be lazy in their reporting. Rather than getting out on the street and looking for stories, they let the stories come to them. However, stories arriving on a silver spoon (like the Tylenol survey) are generally spin-doctored by public relations people.

Although Mesley believes all people, whether poor or rich, deserve to be treated equally by the media and have the public judge peoples stories for themselves, she suggests that this rarely happens. People living on or below the poverty line cannot afford public relations people and consequently tend to be ignored by mainstream media until they do something provocative like camp out in large numbers in the downtown park.

Not only can marginalized people not compete with slick PR firms, but journalists themselves are becoming part of an elite that is on the opposite end of the social scale. Mesley points to those people in the media who have joined the talk show circuit for hefty paychecks. Mesley questions if they are becoming more like the people that, as journalists, they are supposed to be watching, and losing touch with the people they should be serving.

*Is journalism a public service? Is the publicly funded CBC the tool that accurately reflects what Canadians want to see and hear? Is it working for you?*

*To be continued next month.*



# Welfare advocacy on the prairies

Debbie Frost

Debbie Frost is one of hundreds of volunteer welfare advocates in Canada.

I met Debbie and her boyfriend Brian at the Western Canada Poor Peoples Conference last October. They were presenting a workshop on Welfare advocacy.

Debbie and Brian volunteer three days a week at "Equal Justice for All", a non-profit activist group dedicated to protecting the rights of the less fortunate in Saskatoon. Mildred Kerr founded the group in 1985. Mrs. Kerr was professor of Social Work at the University of Saskatchewan. Equal Justice for All helps an average of 800 clients clear up disputes with Social Services each year in Saskatoon.

OV: Debbie, what is a welfare advocate?

Debbie: A welfare advocate is someone who acts on behalf of someone on welfare. People are intimidated by the system and want someone who can help them talk to the welfare workers if they have a dispute. Workers have a bad habit of intimidating clients. Some welfare workers act like the money they are disbursing is coming out of their own pockets.

OV: Why would a person on welfare need a welfare advocate?

Debbie: For example, a person has tried to communicate with a worker and can't get anywhere and feels that the worker is being unfair. The advocate will speak for them. Often people are unaware of their rights, unaware that the worker may be short-

changing them as it were. Usually the welfare advocate is a person who has been on welfare in the past and may have been educated subsequently and as a result knows how to change the system. They know how to talk to the workers and get the best for the client.

OV: Are there any other things that welfare advocates on the prairies should be aware of?



Debbie Frost and Pat Cuthill at recent Western Canadian Poor Person's Conference.

Debbie: A lot of workers will not tell clients what they are entitled too. They act as if the money is going to come out of their own pockets. It's similar to going to an insurance company of the government's, they just don't want to donate any information that will be helpful to the client. For example, people on disabilities are entitled to certain privileges like: travel allowances, special diets, and disability allowance. Often the worker is aware of the benefits and just won't tell the client. Other people, even if they are not on a disability allowance are entitled to certain

things they are unaware of such as: laundry expenses, bus tickets to look for work.

OV: What is the most common complaint you get from welfare clients?

Debbie: Usually, they get off welfare and then they get on the welfare again and on the whims of the social worker in fact. One example is a single mom who was accused of living

common law just because she was sharing the bathroom on the main floor of a house while renting the basement apartment. The worker paid a surprise visit and just by seeing some of the client's belongings in the bathroom on the main floor assumed the woman was living with the man on the main floor. The man was, in fact, her landlord. Another example of a person being unjustly cut off is about a panhandler. The man did panhandle, but the worker said the man is not claiming all the income he makes and he was actually cut off assistance for it. In both cases the people were put back on assistance after advocates intervened and the appeal boards of welfare put the people back on assistance again.

OV: How does a person contact a welfare advocate?

Debbie: If welfare is cutting you off they will send you a letter telling you why. You have a short period of time in which to appeal. They use to send a list of advocates with the letter. They don't anymore. Often people are not aware of welfare advocates and it's a shame there is no legislation in place making it necessary for the government to give a list of advocates.

I don't know about all provinces, but it should be legislated that the government provides a list or advocacy groups. Unfortunately, people will have to find out by word of mouth in most cases. ♦

## Rising up and accepting who we are

Karen Stirling

Once upon a time women were revered - for we were the passageway unto this earth. Our feminine energy represented life in all its beauty and wonderment - body, mind and soul.

As time passed, this image disintegrated and was replaced with one of a subservient nature - devalued, suppressed and disrespected. For years to come we would live as "secondary beings", without rights and with demeaned purpose, eventually accepting this idea as truth. This "truth" has been handed down from generation to generation, burying deep within us a sacred goddess.

It wasn't until the early nineteen hundreds that a group of courageous women challenged this subservient belief system and won the right to vote - to have a voice among 'mankind'. This was a great achievement and step forward, however, it was still very much a man's world, and in his world, a woman's place was in the home - her purpose to serve. It was not yet our time to be equal.

We continued to search for equality and acceptance in the outer world, for a chance to dream and create what was in our hearts. Industry was now leading the way, and with it came a greater demand for workers. Women began to take on supporting roles in the work force, while at the same time, continuing to be the

primary care giver for her husband and family. This added more responsibility to her life, but did not bring about the desired respect and equality. We were still very much pawns in the chess game of life. Useful, but underrated and disposable.

Another major influence on women's lives at this time was the dawning of film and television. Man's perception of the ideal woman flashed upon the screen, delivering messages of how we should look, feel, think and behave. We were cast as sex objects - frail and needy - our purpose was to serve and please. This new image of what we should strive for was unrealistic and further compromised the "female self". The impact of this brain-washing runs deep within us, and continues to shape the thoughts and actions of men, women and children today.

The sixties began a major turning point for women. First with the hippies and their "freedom to be" message, and later with the Women's Liberation movement. Determined to be an equal part of the fast-paced industrial world, they [burned] turned in their bras for jockstraps, and assumed the male attitude and identity in an effort to be accepted. This no-nonsense approach got us working among them, but still not with them. Some forty years later we continue to struggle with the same issue - equality.

It is easy to blame the world around us for our troubles and hardships, and there is no doubt that the views and beliefs we hold as a society affect us and are not always fair and just, but the greatest hurdle we must overcome as women is the view we hold of ourselves.

That is what determines how we act and respond, and it is our actions and responses that create our world. In order to be equal, we must feel equal. In

order to be respected, we must respect ourselves.

We develop our self image and belief system based on the views, actions and opinions of others: the status quo (media), those we encounter in life, and most significantly, our family environment and upbringing. We then judge ourselves according to these ideas to determine our value and self worth.

Throughout my life I'd always "thought" that I was treating myself with respect, but looking back, I have compromised myself on many occasions due to fear. Fear of rejection (disapproval), fear of failure (making mistakes), and fear of success (accepting self), just to name a few. It is I who has not fully believed in myself and my ideas - who has doubted my abilities and questioned my authority and opinion, and it is I who holds myself back from reaching my full potential.

The circumstances of my life have challenged me to overcome and move beyond these limiting fears, and to accept and honor myself for all that I am. I found the courage within my heart to begin fulfilling my dreams and trusting in myself as a woman.

I am learning to trust in what I know, as well as surrender to what I must learn. I am learning to take chances and be vulnerable. I am learning to listen to the ideas and opinions of others and to better express my own. I am learning not to judge myself, and to accept the ways of others. I am learning. I am human, and I make mistakes. Through my willingness to make mistakes - I am learning. I am not alone in this process.

Kermit the frog said it best... "It's not easy being green". ♦



# Poems

## The Canadian Way

In America they may spit on you  
or drag your body two miles  
down a gravel road behind a truck.

but Canadians are different  
nice polite people  
they look away  
a slight shake of the head says  
you do not exist.  
and if you pass out in the entrance ways  
of their fine tall buildings  
they will carry you away,  
quietly, to a warm jail cell  
and forget.

in America they will hate you  
to your face - an enemy you can see -  
they will make wounds  
that cannot be hidden.

but in Canada they will,  
smiling politely, put you in a back room  
where you will die,  
the quiet death of non-existence,  
and no one will ever know  
what killed you  
if you ever lived at all.

Natasha Laurence

## Wasteland of the free

Lands of plenty, of beauty  
only missed by active addictions.

Losing what is so freely given... Spirit.  
Trees with all their strengths... Pride.  
Winged ones with the heightened messages... Unheard.  
Waters that carry opportunities... Passed by.  
Sunrise brings hope... Bright beginnings.

Concrete jungles, wastelands  
choices, voices...

Sandra S. Hope

Unfortunately they could not meet,  
those siamese twins joined at the feet.  
One face up, one face down.

Michael Walters

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# A sound that could set you free

Natasha Laurence



Hugh Herbert



Travis Branter: Cree

A few years ago I was visiting my sister in the Fort Saskatchewan prison. It was a special summer day, a day that families of inmates were allowed past the usual visiting area into the prison beyond. There were children running here and there on the grass in the central compound. There were hot dogs and pop. In spite of the valiant attempts we made at carefree summer fun, the atmosphere was oppressive.

Maybe it was the fact that the grass did not stop at the horizon, but at the foot of concrete walls, or maybe it was the knowledge that we, the free, would be leaving at the end of the day and they, the prisoners, would not.

Then the native drumming began. It stopped me in my tracks, like the heartbeat of the earth suddenly audible, eternal, persistent, beyond time and place. It was a sound stronger than prison walls, stronger than two centuries of oppression and degradation - the voice and spirit of a people. It was a sound that could set you free.

The issues that native people face at this point in their history are complex and deeply rooted, scarred by a multitude of personal and

collective tragedies. But in the sound of the drumming there was something so strong and true. There was hope. Hope that the beauty of these people, with their traditions and wisdom would survive in spite of innumerable obstacles and that the society we are all part of would be richer for that.

The old Lakota was wise. He knew that man's heart away from nature becomes hard; he knew that lack of respect for growing, living things soon led to lack of respect for humans too. So he kept his youth close to its softening influence. **Chief Luther Standing Bear, Lakota**

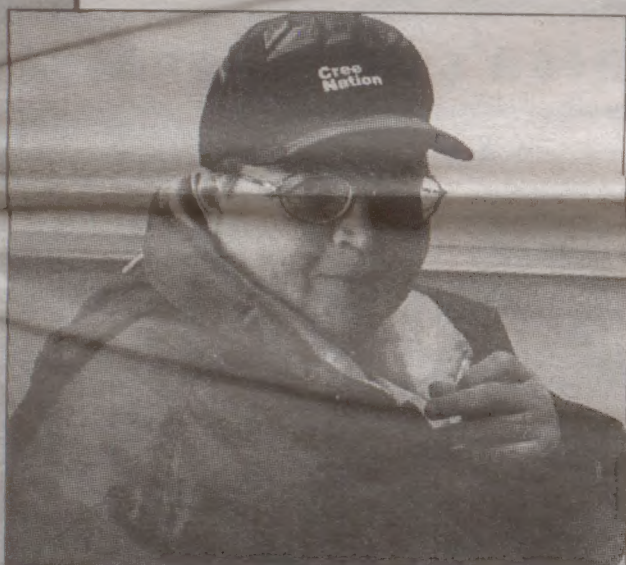
What is life? It is the flash of the firefly in the night. It is the breath of the buffalo in the wintertime. It is the little shadow, which runs across the grass and loses itself in the Sunset. **Crowfoot, Blackfoot**

Did you know that trees talk? Well, they do. They talk to each other and they will talk to you if you listen. Trouble is white people don't listen. They never learned to listen to the Indians so I don't suppose they'll listen to the other voices in nature. But I have learned a lot from trees: sometimes about the weather, sometimes about animals, sometimes about the Great Spirit.

**Walking Buffalo, Stoney**

The white man does not understand the Indian for the reason that he does not understand America. He is too far removed from its formative processes. The roots of the tree of his life have not yet grasped the rock and soil...

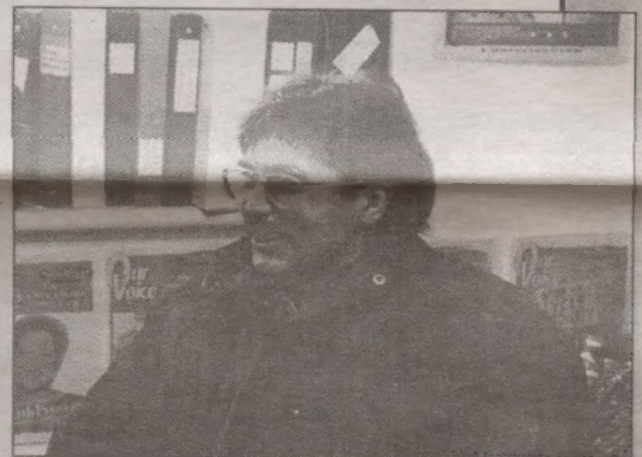
But in the Indian the spirit of the land is still vested; it will be until other men are able to divine and meet its rhythm. Men must be born and reborn to belong. Their bodies must be formed of the dust of their forefather's bones. **Chief Luther Standing Bear, Lakota** ♦



Betty Nordin: Cree



Justin and Jordan Kennedy: Cree



Ed Gorman: Haisla



Churchill Wahweaye: Saulteaux Ojibway





## The MELTDOWN

### George predicts doom and boom again

In the year of Y2K13(give or take five years) the world will come to a major crisis causing earth turbulence. There will be a shifting of the earth's land masses which will cause major floods. There will also be a great glacier melt down, which will increase the ocean's water levels and cover an enormous amount of land. As this process happens there will be great climatic changes.

Stronger storms, pestilence, and anarchy will have humans and existing life forms competing for survival. But man and other

life forms will persist as we did in the past.

Man survived through the ages by being spiritual and having faith in life and surroundings. Up to now our present existence is due to faith and spirit. Without this combination, humans would not have achieved or accomplished what we have in our present world.

In conclusion faith and spirit will lead man out of perils and into the realm of the future. ♦

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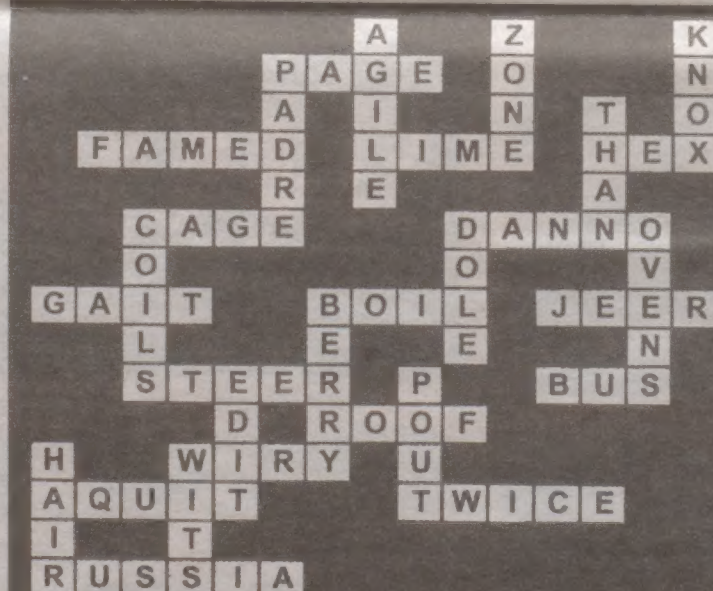
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Michael feels right at home with **Our Voice** and he treats his clients like they're family.

"I'm a people person. I enjoy meeting the public."

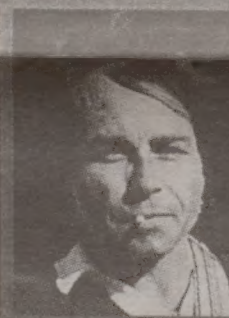
Michael may be found vending **Our Voice** at 101st Street and Jasper Avenue or 105th Street and Whyte Avenue. ♦



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### CITIZEN OF THE MONTH



**Kathie Reith**

Cec Garfin

Kathie is an excellent role model for the community. She has taught English as a second language,

worked in retail sales and has been a child care worker.

Over the years she has volunteered for a variety of activities. The most recent ones include the 2000 Alberta Winter Games in Sherwood Park and for the third year in a row, Operation Red Nose. Over the past 10 years she has been a volunteer at many of the city's festivals and has volunteered for all four Songs of the Street inner city poetry nights.

Kathy finds many benefits from her volunteering.

"I like getting to meet and work with many different people and doing a variety of different tasks. This brings excitement, a happiness to my life that stays with me a long time." ♦

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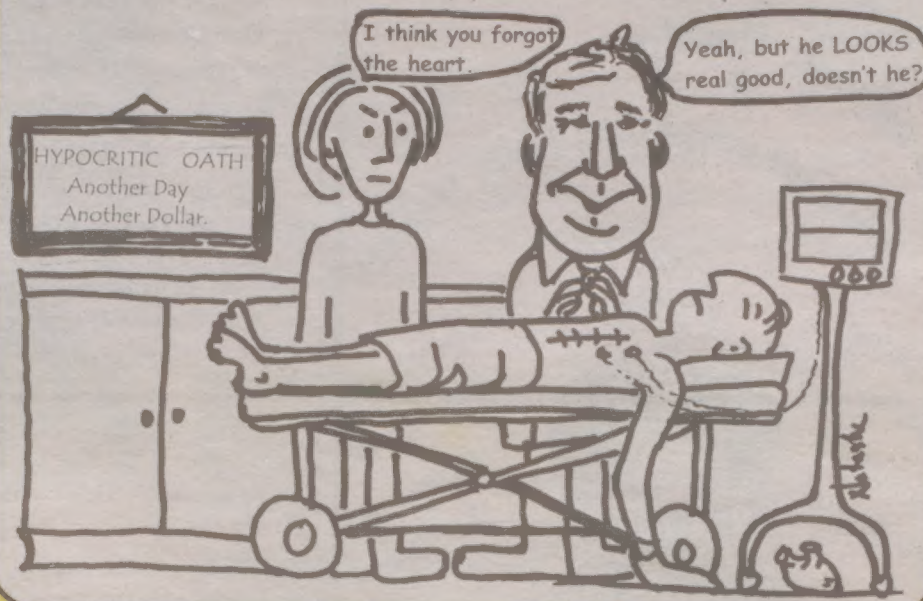
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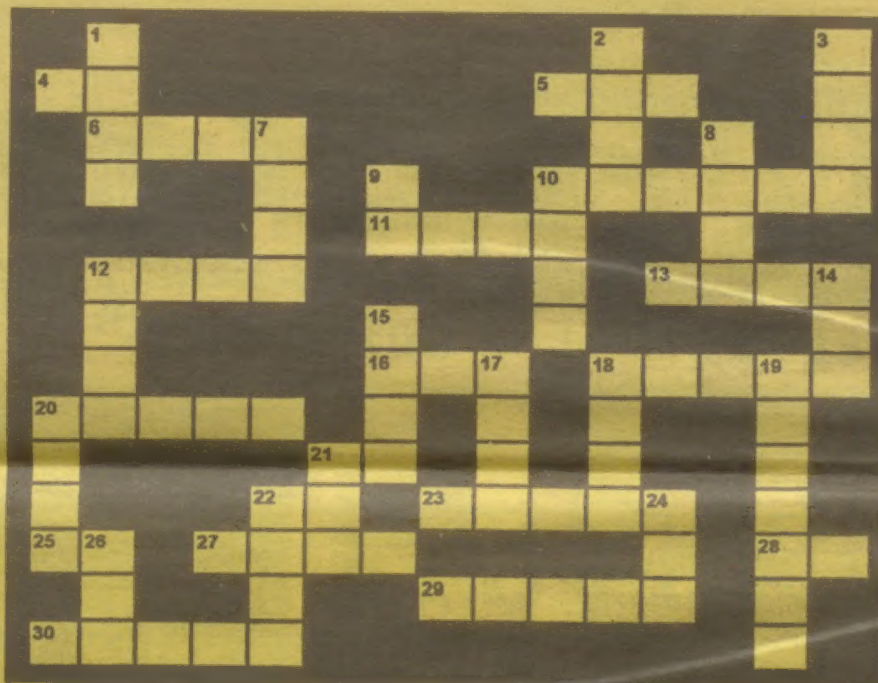
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## Pete's Scrabble Crossword



### ACROSS

- 4) Paul Bunyan's babe
- 5) Cell occupant
- 6) Annoyed
- 10) Tall walking sticks
- 11) Join
- 12) Fix
- 13) Chess piece
- 16) Horse fodder
- 18) Pine
- 20) Light brown
- 21) Pa's mate
- 22) Not she
- 23) Sells
- 25) Ma's mate
- 27) Flethy cheek
- 28) Scram
- 29) Famous Eskimo
- 30) Banff resident

### DOWN

- 1) Leave
- 2) Yuppie home
- 3) Greek God
- 7) Expired
- 8) Singing voice
- 9) What ...?
- 10) Denomination
- 12) Remote control function
- 14) Relatives
- 15) Horse command
- 17) Days of \_\_\_\_
- 18) Unit of measure
- 19) Decimated
- 20) Flash on radar screen
- 21) Kitten talk
- 22) Beer ingredient
- 24) Naughty thing
- 26) Era

## Soupline Bob

